

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 05490

DEPT FOR INR/RNA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PLO
SUBJ: PLO REPRESENTATION IN GENEVA

1. THE PLO IS REPRESENTED IN GENEVA BY A THREE-MAN DIPLOMATIC MISSION WITH OBSERVER STATUS AT THE U.N. UNTIL 1970 THE KEY FIGURE IN SWITZERLAND REPRESENTING THE PLO/FATAH ORGANIZATION WAS FU'AD AL-SHAMALI, RESIDENT IN PARIS. ALTHOUGH THE SWISS NEVER GRANTED AL-SHAMALI PERMISSION TO RESIDE IN SWITZERLAND, HE WAS ABLE TO WORK THROUGH HIS WIFE WHO WAS ORIGINALLY ATTACHED TO THE SAUDI PERMANENT MISSION TO THE U.N. AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA. THE WIFE IS ARGENTINIAN BY BIRTH AND CARRIES AN ARGENTINIAN PASSPORT. AL-SHAMALI TRAVELLED HERE FREQUENTLY UNTIL 1970 OSTENSIBLY TO VISIT HIS WIFE AND FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. DURING THESE TRIPS HE IN FACT HAD EXTENSIVE CONTACT WITH ARAB STUDENTS AND FRIENDLY ARAB ORGANIZATIONS. IN LATE 1970 AL-SHAMALI WAS ISSUED A LAISSEZ-PASSER ON WHICH HE REGULARLY ENTERED SWITZERLAND UNTIL HIS DEATH FROM CANCER IN GENEVA ON AUGUST 3, 1972.

2. IN EARLY 1971, DR. ELLENBERGER, A BERN LAWYER
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AND HEAD OF THE SWISS ARAB FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY ENGAGED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SWISS FOREIGN MINISTRY ON BEHALF OF THE PLO, AIMED AT OBTAINING PERMISSION FOR SOME TYPE OF PLO REPRESENTATION IN SWITZERLAND. THE SWISS, ALTHOUGH RELUCTANT, AGREED TO PERMIT A PLO "INFORMATION OFFICE" IN GENEVA ON THE CONDITION THAT THE STAFF WOULD NOT EXCEED TWO PEOPLE, A NEWSPAPERMAN

AND AN OFFICE ASSISTANT, WHO WOULD NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC STATUS AND WOULD NOT ENGAGE IN TENDENCIOUS ACTIVITIES.

3. FEDERAL LIMITATIONS NOTWITHSTANDING, THE OUTCOME WAS THAT DAUD BARAKAT CAME TO SWITZERLAND IN JUNE 1971 WITH DIPLOMATIC STATUS ACCREDITED AS A PRESS ATTACHE TO THE YEMEN MISSION TO THE U.N. AS THE OFFICIAL PLO REPRESENTATIVE FOR SWITZERLAND. COMMENT: WHY THE SWISS PERMITTED THIS WITHOUT OBJECTION IS NOT CLEAR SINCE NON-DIPLOMATIC STATUS WAS A SPECIFIC CONDITION FOR A PLO REPRESENTATION. END COMMENT.

4. IN 1974, SHAWKIE ARMALI, A PALESTINIAN LAWYER, JOINED THE PLO OFFICE AS LEGAL ADVISOR. AT THIS TIME AN OFFICE ASSISTANT WAS EMPLOYED, A YEMENI NAMED ABDEL ZEINAT MAGID. SHE ALSO WORKED FOR THE YEMENI MISSION AND FOR THE ARAB LEAGUE. UNTIL BARAKAT'S ARRIVAL, THE YEMENI MISSION AND THE ARAB LEAGUE, WHO SHARED OFFICES IN GENEVA, PROVIDED OFFICE SPACE AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT FOR THE PLO.

5. A THIRD DIPLOMAT JOINED THE OFFICE IN 1976, A YOUNG PALESTINIAN POLITICAL SCIENTIST NAMED AFIF SAFIEH. THE ORIGINAL YEMENI OFFICE ASSISTANT LEFT SOMETIME AFTER 1974, AFTER WHICH THERE HAS BEEN A SUCCESSION OF ARAB AND NON-ARAB CLERICAL HELP ENGAGED BY IT.

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6. APART FROM THE PLO AND ITS COMPONENT ELEMENT AL-FATAH, OF WHICH BARAKAT IS ALSO THE HEAD, THERE ARE NO OTHER PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS OFFICIALLY RESIDENT IN GENEVA OR RECOGNIZED BY THE SWISS GOVERNMENT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE ABOVE-MENTIONED SWISS-ARAB FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY, WHICH USUALLY ESPOUSES THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STUDENTS, WHICH HAS MANY PALESTINIAN MEMBERS, BUT ADHERES TO NO PARTICULAR PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT.

7. THE PLO MISSION IN GENEVA ENJOYS THE SAME DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES AS OTHER MISSIONS HERE.

VANDEN HEUVEL

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